

## *A Beautiful Tradition: Adaptation and Ingenuity in a Century of Plateau Women's Art*

## ANSWER KEY 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grades

1. Where is the Plateau region located? What is its main geographical feature south of the Canadian border?

- *The Plateau region is located between the Rocky Mountains on the east and the Cascade Mountains on the west. To the south is the Great Basin and to the north is the sub-arctic region. The main feature of the Plateau region in the U.S. is the Columbia River.*

2. Which Plateau tribes lived in Montana? *Salish, Pend d'Oreille (Kalispel), Kootenai*

3. Name another Plateau tribe that frequently came to Montana to hunt and to trade with Plains tribes such as the Crow: *Nez Perce. (Bannock and Shoshone would also be correct.)*

4. What are two general cultural differences between tribes of the Plateau and those of the Plains?

- **Plateau tribes were fishing cultures** who also hunted. Plains tribes were hunters.
- **Plateau tribes were more egalitarian** between men and women—women could have leadership roles, fight in wars, and be spiritual leaders just as men could.
- **Plateau tribes did not have as much competition for resources between tribes**, because they had more food resources in their environment, so they tended to be more at peace with each other. Warfare and raiding were central to the cultures of Plains tribes.
- **Plateau villages were semi-permanent according to seasons** and were reused earthen lodges along rivers in fishing areas. Plain tribes were more mobile because they depended on bison hunting. (*Salish and Kootenai also used tipis.*)

5. List at least two of the art forms common among Plateau tribes **before** they acquired beads:

- **Coiled baskets**
- **Carving** (wood, bighorn sheep horns, stone)
- **Twined bags and baskets** (like cornhusk bags)
- **Painting and dyeing.**

6. Plateau tribes use many different materials (or media) in their art. List four different materials used either to **make** or to **decorate** Plateau art before Europeans and Euro-Americans came to the region:

- **For construction:** rawhide; buckskin/tanned hides; plant fibers like corn husks, Indian hemp, cattail, cedar bark; sheep horns, stone, wood.
- **For decoration:** plant dyes and clay pigments (to paint); shells; bones; plant fibers (beargrass, cedar bark, dyed corn husk, etc.)

7. Where did glass beads come from? How and when did Plateau tribes acquire them?

- *Intertribal trade routes brought European glass beads to the Plateau as early as 1600, but only rarely. Canadian and American fur traders brought beads to the Plateau via their Métis, Cree and Chippewa employees who were the primary source for glass beads. Glass Beads came to the Plateau as a regular trade item as early as 1820.*

8. What are the names of two **sizes** of beads used as trade items? “Pony” and “seed.”

9. What is special about faceted (cut) beads? *They have flat sides, so they reflect the light and make the beadwork sparkle.*

10. Beads quickly became very popular in Plateau (and Plains) art. List three reasons why.

- *Beads did not have to be harvested or soaked prior to use. Plant fibers did.*
- *Beads were available in many colors; they did not have to be dyed like plant fibers did.*
- *Beads made curvilinear designs possible.*
- *Beads were a symbol of trade, well-being and affluence.*
- *Beads could be acquired at any time of year and used at any time of year.*
- *Beads were easy to use and beautiful to look at.*

11. What **design type** is used in the decorations on **cornhusk bags** and **baskets** of Plateau tribes? *Geometric.* What **design type** is most common on the beaded bags of Plateau tribes? *Realistic or representational.*

12. What is a **motif**? What is one motif often used on beaded Plateau-style bags and purses?

- *A motif is the main theme or idea in a design or pattern.*
- *Common motifs in Plateau beaded bags are horses, flowers and birds, and (later) scenes of Indian life.*

13. What is the difference in **function** between traditional cornhusk bags and the beaded flat bags of the Plateau region?

- *Cornhusk bags (twined bags in general) were used for **harvesting and storing plant foods**, like roots.*
- *Beaded bags, which were often smaller, were used as **part of ceremonial regalia**, to carry personal items (like purses), and were handed down as **heirlooms**. Beaded bags were also **sold to collectors** (Euro-Americans) for cash.*

14. Describe **contour beading**:

- *Contour beading is when the lines of beads used in the background conform to the shape of the image in the foreground (the design motif). This **style** of beading makes the background appear to have motion or “waves” in it.*

15. What is **false embroidery** and what kind of Plateau art uses this technique?

- *False embroidery looks like embroidery, but the design is actually woven into the structure of the basket or bag. It is used to decorate twined and coiled baskets and bags. (It is also called “imbrication” but your students might not remember this term.)*

16. Who were the **primary** Plateau **artists** creating twined bags and beaded bags? *Women*

17. **See individual responses.** Look for descriptions of bag **type, media, composition, design type, style, techniques, motif, colors**, in addition to each student’s personal assessment of the item.